

# **CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR MICHIGAN STATE PARKS**

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

Sleepy Hollow State Park

7835 E. Price Road

Laingsburg, MI

## ***MINUTES***

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Tom Ferguson, Vice Chair  
James Bradley  
Betsy Clark  
Mike Foote  
Chris Graham  
Jim Hendricks  
Robert Hoffmeyer  
Kathy Lewand  
Mike McDonald  
Chuck Nelson  
Mary Pitcher  
Todd Scott  
Sam Washington

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Murdock Jemerson, Chair  
Tom Bailey  
Rev. Hurley Coleman, Jr.  
Bill Rose

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT**

April Bennett  
Mary Brown  
Duncan Wyeth

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT**

Curtis Hertel  
Sandra Clark

### **DNR SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT**

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR Parks and Recreation (PRD)  
Vicki Anthes, PRD  
George Cameron, PRD  
Tony Herek, PRD  
Harold Herta, PRD  
Yolanda Taylor, PRD  
Linda Warren, PRD  
Jim Radabaugh, DNR Forest, Mineral and Fire Management  
Kevin Frailey, DNR Office of Communications

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Tom Ferguson, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with roll call, introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda. He introduced the newly appointed member, Michael Foote, and thanked him for attending his first Committee meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public appearances.

## **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

No discussion or opposition to the Minutes. Mary Pitcher moved to approve the Minutes; Betsy Clark seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the July 25, 2007 Minutes were approved and adopted by the Committee.

## **TRAILWAYS PRESENTATION**

Vice-Chair Ferguson introduced Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director of the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance (MTGA). Ms. Krupiarz gave a brief presentation on MTGA's "*Connecting Michigan – Trailways Vision and Action Plan*," a comprehensive set of recommendations for completing an interconnected, multi-use statewide trailways system in Michigan. The plan is the result of the year-long work of over 100 task force members, which contains 39 goals and 109 action steps that will be acted upon over the next several years. This initiative is in conjunction with Governor Granholm's recently released state trails initiative, "*Michigan Trails at the Crossroads: A Vision for Connecting Michigan*."

Ms. Krupiarz presented a Resolution asking for the Committee's support and endorsement of MTGA's initiative. Chuck Nelson motioned to adopt and support the Resolution; Betsy Clark seconded the motion; there were no objections and the motion to support the Resolution and endorse the efforts of the MTGA unanimously carried.

Ms. Krupiarz also reminded the Committee that MTGA's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Michigan State Trails and Greenway Legislative Day is scheduled for October 10, 2007 at the Capitol, where they will highlight their plans to the legislators, and invited all Committee members to attend.

Ms. Krupiarz closed by mentioning other projects that the MTGA is involved in, and thanked the Committee for their support.

Discussions ensued regarding several trail initiatives and ways to seek funding in support of a statewide trails system, to include counties, local units of government, etc.

Committee member Sam Washington commented that the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund scoring criteria has been revised to include trailways, which should give additional weight to funding trails.

Committee member Chuck Nelson recommended making this presentation to the county road commissions.

Jim Radabaugh, DNR's Recreation and Trails Manager, commented that they also have a few initiatives going on at the same time in response to the Governor's plan, to include collaboration

with the Michigan Department of Transportation and making connections with local communities, which may also benefit efforts and present opportunities for additional funding. He also mentioned that they will be having these discussions at the American Trails Conference coming up in December in Chicago, Illinois.

Vice-Chair Ferguson thanked Ms. Krupiarz and Mr. Radabaugh for their presentations and input.

MTGA's plan was released on May 15, 2007, and is available at [www.connectingmichigan.org](http://www.connectingmichigan.org). The Governor's plan is also available at the DNR's website, under Recreation and Camping, then Trails and Pathways link.

## **SCORP**

Committee member, Chuck Nelson, gave a presentation on the status of the State's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, commonly known as "SCORP." Mr. Nelson gave an overview of the SCORP plan requirements and major initiatives contained in the 2003-2007 plan. He explained that one of the requirements is to update the plan every 10 years, so the Department is now required to complete a new plan which will incorporate ample public input, implement a grants component, wetlands priority, cooperation between states, and an overview of local and county inventories compared to state and federal recreational land inventories.

He also gave an overview on the results of a Michigan voter survey, and emphasized that some of the comments or responses that need to be addressed include better information and marketing, better trails, more operations funding, reduction or elimination of fees, and more land for public outdoor recreation. Also based on voter survey, Michigan voters were strongly in support of retaining the initial 7 priorities identified in the 2003-2007 SCORP plan, namely: conservation of natural resources, trails (land and water based), universal access, community recreation, improving the state park infrastructure, improving the state forest recreation infrastructure, and cooperation and coordination among recreation providers.

The draft 2008-2012 SCORP plan will retain the 7 initiatives identified from the 2003-2007 SCORP plan, and will also include recruitment and retention of hunters and anglers, encouraging "green" technology in outdoor recreation development, and expanding, improving and connecting Michigan's trails, including blueways and greenways.

The draft 2008-2012 SCORP plan will be made available on the internet, with a 30-day public comment period, and 5 public workshops scheduled for Oct. 4 (in Marquette), Oct. 5 (in Roscommon), Oct. 9 (in Grand Rapids), Oct. 11 (in Bay City), and Oct. 12 (in Detroit). In addition to this Committee, the draft 2008-2012 SCORP plan will also be presented to the Natural Resources Commission, the Michigan State Waterways Commission, the Statewide Council and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board for input.

It is anticipated the final plan will be presented to the Natural Resources Commission in November for information, and action in December, 2007, and out by the end of 2007 or January, 2008.

Ex-Officio member, Duncan Wyeth, recommended holding a campus-based public forum to target students/audience in outdoor recreational or public policy programs.

Chuck Nelson said he would make the presentation available on the internet and also distribute it to all Committee members.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION REPORTS AND UPDATES**

### **Good Things**

Ron Olson, DNR Parks and Recreation Chief, informed the Committee that Tippy Dam has now being declared as a state recreation area instead of a boating access site due the enormous amount of use at this site. This now brings the state parks and recreation area total to 98.

Committee member, Betsy Clark, asked why this reclassification was not discussed with this Committee. Ron Olson responded that it was discussed in essence, but staff should have come back to this Committee to update them on why they decided to designate it as a state recreation area for review/comment before proceeding. He committed to keeping this Committee informed of any future reclassifications of this nature.

### **Big Sable Point Lighthouse**

Ron Olson invited Committee members to attend the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of The Big Sable Point Lighthouse, to take place on Saturday, Oct. 27, at Ludington State Park. He also presented a Resolution to congratulate the Big Sable Point Lighthouse Keepers Association on their 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for consideration by the Committee.

Mike McDonald motioned to support the resolution; Sam Washington seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion was adopted.

### **Kicking Bear Event**

Ron Olson reminded the Committee about the Parks and Recreation's outreach and urban initiatives, with the Kicking Bear One-on-One Event being one of the most successful events thus far. It was held at this location (Sleepy Hollow State Park) on August 24-25. Kicking Bear One-On-One is a nationwide program and was founded by Ray Howell (a competitive power lifter and archer) whose real passion is providing opportunities for underprivileged or troubled youth to experience outdoor recreation.

Tim Machowicz, Sleepy Hollow State Park Supervisor, showed some slides of the event, which brought in a total of 325 children from all over the state (i.e. Flint, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Traverse City, and some from out-of-state) and from all walks of life, 86 mentors and numerous sponsors (i.e. Gander Mountain, Bohning Archery, etc).

This event was held at Pontiac Lake State Park last year, and other events are stirring out of the Saginaw Cities of Promise initiative.

Another opportunity that has been provided is to the Detroit Theatre of Dramatic Arts, where high school drama students performed a rendition of “Dream Girls” at the Interlochen State Park’s 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, the grand opening of the Riverwalk at Tri-Centennial State Park and Harbor, Sleeper State Park and Fayette Historic Park, as part of their “Art in Michigan State Parks Ambassadors Initiative.” Other performances are being planned in state parks and recreation areas for 2008.

### **Racing for Wildlife**

Ron Olson reminded the Committee that the DNR Parks and Recreation Division was approached by The Conservation Fund, on behalf of the Ryan Newman Foundation, to establish a partnership between The Conservation Fund, the Ryan Newman Foundation, Michigan International Speedway, and the DNR Parks and Recreation Division to renovate the Mill Lake Outdoor Center youth camp. An announcement regarding this new partnership was made at the NASCAR race on Aug. 18 at the MIS racetrack in Brooklyn, Michigan, in an effort to start raising money towards this endeavor.

An internal workgroup was established and they had their first meeting the week of Sept. 10 to begin formalizing an agreement. The cost to renovate the Mill Lake Outdoor Center will be covered by donations raised through the Ryan Newman Foundation, Michigan International Speedway, and in-kind services by the Department.

Ron Olson also mentioned that they were contacted by a unanimous donor to sponsor Michigan state parks and recreation areas by placing an advertisement on the hood of a Busch series car, which ran in the Carfax 250 Busch Race at MIS the same weekend. This was an approximated \$30,000 donation to give us sponsorship on the hood of this racecar.

### **Porkies Ski Lodge**

Harold Herta, Parks and Recreation Resource Management Section Chief, alerted the Committee to the current situation at the Porcupine Mountains ski hill operations. Last year, an inspection of the double chair lift identified it was in need of repairs. The operator of the ski hill contemplated walking away from operating the ski hill due to the costs associated with repairing this chair lift. Discussions are underway with the ski hill and lodge operators to negotiate amendments to their leases in an effort to continue operations at the Porcupine Mountains, and help out with the maintenance and repair of the ski lift.

An update on the status of these negotiations will be provided to this Committee at their next meeting.

## **PRD Strategic Planning Update**

A written report regarding the status of the Parks and Recreation's Strategic Planning efforts was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised.

Vicki Anthes, PRD Planning Section Chief, reminded the Committee that the workshop scheduled last spring was cancelled due to travel restriction, so their strategy for input was changed. It was decided that staff would contact over 150 stakeholders and conduct telephone interviews to obtain public input, including members of the legislature, the Natural Resources Commission, the Michigan State Waterways Commission, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board, this Committee and several stakeholder interest groups and organizations. A copy of the survey questions was provided to the Committee. Select staff will be trained and begin contacting these stakeholders during the months of October and November.

They plan to have a draft plan completed by February, 2008 and open it up for public comment by scheduling public input workshops and presenting the information at various outdoor recreational events/shows (i.e. Outdoorama, boat shows, etc.) to give the public formal information and a chance to provide input/comments. The goal is to have the draft plan presented to this body in March, 2008, and completed by spring, 2008 to help fuel our financing efforts.

## **Legislative Updates**

A written report regarding recent legislation that may or does affect the Michigan state parks and recreation system was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised.

Harold Herta also commented that the package of bills to create a Great Lakes State Park has not moved through the legislature.

## **Camping Fees and Policy Issues**

Harold Herta also provided the Committee with information regarding the current efforts of the Central Reservation System (CRS) camping team and what they are doing to fine tune the CRS and encourage people with a financial incentive to stay in the parks. There were no questions or comments.

## **Land Issues**

A written report regarding the status of various land issues that affect the state parks and recreation system was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report.

## **Fall Events**

A list of 2007 fall harvest festivals and other events scheduled in state parks and recreation areas was provided to the Committee, along with a list of state parks or recreation areas that offer camping year-round (including winter camping), and those that have rustic cabins or yurts available.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL REPORTS**

A written, financial status report regarding revenues, camping and harbor nights, boating access and motor vehicle permit sales, with comparisons to last years statistics, through the end of August, 2007 was provided to the Committee.

Harold Herta mentioned that we seriously need to take a look at raising more revenue prior to Fiscal Year 2009. Adding cabins to the reservation system took some time this year, but will hopefully help generate additional revenues next year.

Committee member, Jim Hendricks, recommended incorporating short-term, fee issues into the long-range financing plan.

No additional questions were raised and there was no further discussion regarding this report.

## **State Budget/Park Closures**

The question was raised regarding the state's budget situation and what effect it will have on the state parks and recreation areas. Ron Olson commented that the Parks and Recreation Division is prepared and has a contingency plan in place in case the legislature/Governor does not pass an appropriations bill by the end of September deadline. The question was raised as to why state parks and recreation areas should be affected, especially since they do not receive any general (tax) fund support and mostly operate on revenues generated. Ron Olson responded that the Parks and Recreation Division cannot operate without a budget in place, even though we operate under restricted funds and revenues. He closed by stating that, if there is a state government shutdown, we chance losing an estimated \$90,100 per day.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Joint Report of the Fee/Short-Term and Long-Term Finance Subcommittees**

Chuck Nelson, Subcommittee Co-Chair, commented that all Committee members attended this joint subcommittee meeting and talked exclusively about long-term financing issues, focusing on a license plate fee package proposal, similar to the State of Montana's.

Additional comments and questions were raised and discussed, including the options of still printing and distributing motor vehicle permit window stickers, multiple car discounts, and a protected, restricted funding source for these revenues.

Committee member Mary Brown also commented that we need to review and consider the criticisms of the hunters and fishermen in response to the Hunting and Fishing License Fee Package. We need to fully educate the public (state park users/campers) of what this proposal entails and the monies will be used (i.e. where their dollars are going).

Committee member Sam Washington commented that the only other alternative would be to establish a totally new, protected fund, for revenues generated by a license plate fee package proposal, similar to proposal 1.

Based on discussions at the subcommittee meeting and comments received, committee member Chuck Nelson offered to pull together a refined Resolution and proposal and distribute it to all members for their review and comment prior to the Committee's next scheduled meeting.

### **Marketing and Interpretation**

This subcommittee did not meet due to the joint subcommittee meeting that was held to address long-term sustainable funding, where all committee members were present. Nothing to report.

### **Programming and Operations**

This subcommittee did not meet due to the joint subcommittee meeting that was held to address long-term sustainable funding, where all committee members were present. Nothing to report.

### **Stewardship**

Although this subcommittee did not meet, Subcommittee Chair Mike McDonald did remind his subcommittee members that they need to review the two, full report General Management Plans for Wetzel and Fort Custer Recreation Areas so they can act on and report their decision to the entire Committee at their November meeting. He reminded other Committee members that they were provided with, and should review, the Executive Recommendations for each plan and also be prepared to act on them at the next meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING/LOCATION**

After discussion, the Committee agreed to hold the November 28<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Ionia Recreation Area.

Committee Vice-Chair, Tom Ferguson, motioned to adjourn the meeting; Betsy Clark seconded the motion; and the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.